

29th May 2022
Ascension Sunday

Knowledge

“The Master said, ‘Yu, shall I teach you what knowledge is? When you know a thing, to hold that you know it; and when you do not know a thing, to allow that you do not know it. This is knowledge.’”

Confucius, *The Analects* (as translated by Arthur Waley)

It's Ascension Sunday. But for my village, it's also the day of the Edinburgh Marathon. Beginning in the city, the course wends its way along the East Lothian coast through Port Seton and Cockenzie, into the country, and back to Edinburgh – through my village again! Roads are closed; parking is restricted; buses are rerouted; getting to church is difficult – because of the crowds of runners and spectators who're involved in the marathon.

For many people – runners who tackle the whole course; four-person relay teams; volunteer marshals; council staff; supporters; folk who line the route – this is a special day, the culmination of much preparation. But there are some who see the marathon as a “scunner”, a bother, a disruption, to be lived with as well as possible until normality returns.

The Ascension is like that for me. For many people, it means something, or even a lot, because they're involved. It matters. It takes its place in the pattern of their year. And there some, like me this year, for whom it just happens. Maybe it's not a “scunner” or a disruption, but it's only something that is noted in passing. Someone has suggested I have ADD – “Ascension Deficit Disorder”. Mmm ...

Do I worry about it? No, I don't. When I “know a thing” and understand something – like the Ascension – I “hold that I know it”. But when I don't know or understand, I now allow myself *not* to know it – or, indeed, not to understand. “This is knowledge”, and that's enough for me on Ascension Sunday. If I don't know what it's about, or it means little, there's no fault in me. It will be what it will be, and so there's no point in worrying about it if it doesn't affect me in ways that might be expected.

The meaning of the Ascension will have its place for me. Maybe not now, or every year. Maybe not at all. But for today, I'll stop worrying about it, let it be, and move on – as we all have to do after a Sunday when the Edinburgh marathon goes through our village.

A prayer for today

“Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,” the Psalmist wrote. What a knowledgeable man!